

conceded he may have “overstated” Skibine’s role, acknowledging that he knew Skibine did not make his recommendation in a vacuum.⁶⁴⁶

During Babbitt’s House testimony, he characterized his statement to Eckstein that Ickes wanted or expected a decision as “an excuse” for why he would not accede to Eckstein’s request for an extension of time.⁶⁴⁷ Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Cal.) characterized it as a “white lie.”⁶⁴⁸ In the Grand Jury, Babbitt further testified that he had decided before or during his congressional appearance that he was not going to admit explicitly to having told a “white lie” to Eckstein on national television.

Q: You used the expression earlier today in your testimony that this was a white lie, by which I take it you mean a lie with no significance, no real impact?

A: Yeah, an excuse.

Q: Yet, in your House and Senate testimony, while other people used different references to this being some sort of dissembling or deception, you never did. Was there any reason for that, Secretary Babbitt?

A: Look, I’m up there getting, you know, pilloried and beat around and, you know, a white lie is an easy word to use here.

It’s a hard word to use when you’re thinking of the way the press operates in this country and, man, it’s hard to step up to that in that context. That’s all. I mean, it is.⁶⁴⁹

In answer to further questioning, Babbitt acknowledged that he also would not have conceded at the Senate hearing that his August 1996 letter to McCain was misleading:

⁶⁴⁶*Id.* at 192.

⁶⁴⁷Babbitt House Test. at 773.

⁶⁴⁸Babbitt House Test. at 838.

⁶⁴⁹Babbitt G.J. Test., July 7, 1999, at 151-52.